

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
Colorado River Authority of Utah
September 21, 2023 -- 10:00 a.m. MT

VIRTUAL ONLY

1. **Call to Order – Gene Shawcroft, Chair**

Mr. Shawcroft called the meeting to order at 10:00 am stating there was a quorum and asked each attendee to briefly introduce themselves. A list of attendees is included in Attachment I. Mr. Shawcroft introduced Cadi Sande, the Authority's new Manager of Administration and Finance who previously worked in Finance for the Governor's Office and will fulfill the administrative and contractual functions previously performed by Danny Schoenfeld.

2. **Approval of the Minutes of the August 24, 2023, Colorado River Authority of Utah Meeting – Gene Shawcroft**

There being no comments on the August 24, 2023 minutes, a motion was made by Mr. Larson and seconded by Mr. Renstrom to approve the minutes. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

3. **Public Comment Pursuant to the Public Comment Policy of the Authority (limit of 2 minutes per person) – Gene Shawcroft**

There were no public comments.

4. **Report of the Chair – Gene Shawcroft**

Mr. Shawcroft discussed the Post 2026 Operational Guidelines explaining the focus has shifted from a scoping situation to developing technical alternatives. Mr. Shawcroft announced that Utah will host a Basin States technical workshop in October, which is intended to enable the Basin States to develop a 7-Basin State consensus alternative to deliver to the Department of the Interior by March of 2024. Mr. Shawcroft explained that the letter submitted by the 4 Upper Division States called attention to the imbalance between the available supply and demand and noted that Upper Basin States are limited by natural hydrology and are dependent on mother nature in their water management.

Mr. Shawcroft discussed the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to modify the 2007 Interim Guidelines and stated a revised draft is anticipated in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Shawcroft discussed today's (September 21, 2023) Upper Colorado River Commission (UCRC) 304th Part II Special Meeting to consider a Potential 2024 SCPP that will differ from the current 2023 SCPP in several significant ways, including firm fixed pricing, a minimum of 50 acre-feet (AF) conservation per project, and project solicitation beginning earlier, in October instead of December.

Mr. Shawcroft discussed the potential adoption of a resolution that identifies how the Drought Response Operations Agreement (DROA) should operate, and explained this resolution was from the 4 Upper Division States clearly defining what they think DROA should be. Mr. Shawcroft explained the resolution provides that water released to Powell be retained until full recovery is achieved upstream; DROA releases will not negatively impact operations such that more water is released from Lake Powell than would have been without DROA; and future DROA releases will not cause an overall reduction in Lake Powell elevations. Mr. Shawcroft also explained that the Lower Division States are making progress but dealing with extremely challenging issues and

asked for the 7-States meeting in Albuquerque tomorrow (September 22, 2023) to be cancelled, however, the principals are meeting virtually this afternoon (September 21, 2023).

5. **Report of the Executive Director – Amy Haas, Executive Director**

Ms. Haas explained that Utah was a signatory for three letters on the Post 2026 scoping comments that included a Utah-specific letter, an Upper Division States letter submitted by UCRC, and a 7-States Letter, and mentioned all letters were on the Authority website. Ms. Haas discussed the major differences between the two Basins and explained the Upper Division States think the scope should be narrowly focused on the operations of Lakes Powell and Mead and Lower Basin shortage while the Lower Basin States want to focus on the entire Basin, including upstream initial units and other system facilities, such that the Upper Basin would also be responsible for the supply and demand imbalance that Mr. Shawcroft discussed (the 1.2 – 1.5 million acre-feet of Lower Basin overuse). Ms. Haas explained Utah and the other 6 states are in the negotiating phase of the Basin States Alternative, and the States have until March of next year (2024) to address the scope issue and system imbalance.

Ms. Haas explained that \$50M in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds have been made available to the four Upper Division States through the UCRC over the next five years to install and improve water management infrastructure and data collection across the Upper Colorado River Basin. Ms. Haas explained an initial commitment of approximately \$8.7M is available to the Upper Division States this current fiscal year and that UCRC has asked each state to prioritize their needs, especially in the areas of stream gauging, eddy covariance stations, and weather stations.

Ms. Haas asked Betsy Morgan, Staff Engineer, to report on the Gap Analysis and the Phase I report logistics. Ms. Morgan explained that at the last Board Meeting in August 2023 a summary of the Gap Analysis efforts was provided, and the completed report is posted on the Authority's website. Ms. Morgan stated she would be sending out a link to the report to all Board Members this week (of September 21, 2023) and that efforts are underway to coordinate some of the needed improvements identified in the Gap Analysis, especially in light of the available BIL funds. Vice Chair Ferry noted that the \$50M of available funds is a great opportunity, and wondered whether the data collected through the BIL efforts will be coordinated with the State Engineer's Office (i.e. Division of Water Rights). Ms. Haas explained that similar to the Gap Analysis, extensive coordination will occur with the Division of Water Rights and Division of Water Resources during the next phases of the Authority's water measurement work.

Ms. Sande discussed the fiscal year (FY) 2024 budget request which was approved by the Board at the June meeting. Ms. Sande explained the budget request has been submitted to GOPB for FY 2024 for \$8.4M and is currently in the review process. Vice Chair Ferry asked if the Authority was asking for any additional appropriations for this upcoming year and Ms. Sande replied that the Authority was in good financial standing and that no additional funds were being requested.

6. **System Status Update – Lily Bosworth, Staff Engineer, and Betsy Morgan, Staff Engineer**

Ms. Bosworth discussed the hydrology for the past water year and displayed satellite-based data that showed relatively dry subsurface hydrology. Ms. Bosworth discussed Water Year (WY) 2023 Stream Flow and explained in Eastern Utah there was above average stream flow, however, it was only slightly above average in Southwest Wyoming and Western Colorado. Ms. Bosworth discussed surface hydrology and explained the Upper Colorado River Basin streamflow had been normal overall with the Uinta Mountains and Colorado Mainstream headwaters above normal and

the Southeast Basin below normal. Ms. Bosworth discussed atmospheric hydrology and explained the WY 2023 Upper Colorado River Basin precipitation was normal overall, but the September 2023 precipitation was variable, and the early WY 2024 was expected to be normal. Ms. Bosworth discussed the WY 2023 temperature which she explained was cool for the Upper Colorado River Basin and slightly warm for September 2023 with WY 2024 expected to be above normal. Ms. Bosworth discussed the Current US Drought Monitor which shows increased drought severity in the Southeast Colorado River Basin and explained that drought conditions improved but still persist in the Upper Colorado River Basin.

Ms. Morgan discussed system operations and Upper Basin Storage through September 17, 2023. Ms. Morgan explained the water year significantly increased water storage in the Uinta Basin and Price and Santa Rafael River Basins. Ms. Morgan displayed the reservoir storage and explained Lake Powell was 38% full and Lake Mead was 34% full and stated a year ago the reservoirs in total were 10% lower in system storage.

Ms. Morgan discussed Water Years 2023 and 2024 and summarized key Lake Powell operations, stating that operations for Lake Powell in 2023 were governed by the lower elevation balancing tier with an initial projected release of 7 MAF for Water Year 2023, but that hydrologic conditions in April were sufficient to release up to 9.5 MAF in a balancing release. Ms. Morgan discussed the April through September timeframe where the projected release from Lake Powell in WY 2023 was updated each month based on system conditions. Ms. Morgan explained that the most probable unregulated inflow (April-July) decreased from 11.3 MAF in April to an observed volume of 10.62 MAF, with the most probable balancing release decreasing from 9.5 MAF (April) to 8.65 MAF (September).

Ms. Morgan discussed the Glen Canyon Dam hourly releases and displayed a plot showing the hourly releases in cubic feet per second for the month of September 2023, explaining that during September, Reclamation made frequent adjustments and down-ramped releases to ensure the necessary end of Water Year release volume is achieved.

Ms. Morgan discussed the Lake Powell unregulated inflow volumes for Water Years 2023 and 2024 in comparison to historical inflows where there is a forecasted inflow of 13.6 MAF for WY 2023 and there is a large degree of uncertainty in the forecast for WY 2024. Ms. Morgan explained the projections of future system conditions for both Lake Powell and Lake Mead were created using the Colorado River Mid-Term Modeling System (CRMMS) in ensemble mode and CRMMS uses 30 different traces of unregulated inflow forecasts provided by the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center to produce a range of possible conditions.

7. **Request approval of Pre-Award Spending on Potential Snow Water Supply Forecasting Project – Lily Bosworth**

Ms. Bosworth discussed the Flakes, Flights, and Forecasts: Snowpack Measurement Enhancements in the Uinta Mountain Headwaters proposal to the Bureau of Reclamation stating the Authority has not yet been notified whether the grant was selected. Ms. Bosworth explained a critical part of the project is to perform a survey of the land surface without any snowpack which was originally scheduled to be performed in Quarter 3 of 2023. Ms. Bosworth explained she was asking the Board for approval to use approximately \$283,000 of the Authority's budget to cover the snow-free survey before the snow begins to fall in the project area. Mr. Humphrey stated it was important to have a baseline and made a motion to approve this request, which was seconded by Ms. Hasenyager and unanimously approved by the Board.

8. **Advisory Council Updates**

a. Adam Snow, Southern Advisory Council

Adam Snow introduced himself as the co-chair of the Southern Advisory Council replacing Brian Steed and explained that recently the Council split into two sub-groups to reduce travel and allow for more localized discussion of issues which he believes has been a success. Mr. Snow explained a great deal of effort has been put into messaging for water conservation in his region and that water use has successfully decreased due to this effort. Mr. Snow discussed the housing growth in Southern Utah that is exploding and stated the Council would like the Board to prioritize preserving Lake Powell's power plan, as was requested in January, and explained the Council would like guidance as to how they can be most helpful to the Board.

b. William Merkley, Central Advisory Council

Mr. Merkley explained the Council's focus has been on the operations of Flaming Gorge as it relates to DROA and the Post-2026 operational guideline negotiations and thanked the Authority staff for their comments on the Notice of Intent and DROA recovery. Mr. Merkley explained the Council was looking forward to hearing about 2024 SSCP, helping set up a more permanent demand management program, and working with the Board.

c. Jordan Nielson, Northern Advisory Council

Mr. Nielson encouraged Board members to attend the Council meetings and explained the Council would like more substantive interactions with the Board. Mr. Nielson encouraged consideration of supporting a blend of UCRC's proposed SSCP strategies 2 and 3 (maximizing water conservation and focusing on Demand Management and innovation that supports local water resiliency) where the UCRC can take advantage of federal money but choose focused projects. Mr. Nielson stated the Council supports the comments in the Notice of Intent and explained the Council believes curtailment planning is urgent and they suggest the Authority consider a robust educational effort to support this.

Mr. Shawcroft mentioned it would be helpful for the Board to receive feedback from the Councils on concerns regarding Post-2026 from their specific regions, what the Council believes could have been achieved through the 2007 Interim Guidelines that wasn't, and steps Utah could do better moving forward.

9. **Remarks from the Board**

Ms. Hasenyager explained in June 2022 the Rio Blanco Water Conservancy Districts applied for a right of way to use public lands managed by the BLM in the White River Field office area to construct a new reservoir known as Wolf Creek Reservoir. Ms. Hasenyager further explained this was in Colorado and had a maximum capacity of 66 KAF to divert water from the White River to the reservoir. Ms. Hasenyager thanked Cody Stewart for his assistance in arranging meetings with Representative Curtis's office to discuss having Representative Curtis sponsor the Salinity Control Fix Act Bill. Ms. Hasenyager discussed the landscaping incentive programs across the state that have received 3,800 applications and have had 2 million square feet of grass replaced with alternative landscaping.

Mr. Larsen stated the reservoirs in his area were in pretty good shape and starting to fill back up. Mr. Larsen stated they were sending water downstream to Powell right now and it's been a great year.

Mr. Ferry asked what impact the upcoming government shutdown might have on the Colorado River System and Authority activities and Mr. Stewart replied he just returned from Washington DC and there was a lot of uncertainty regarding the upcoming shutdown. Mr. Stewart explained the Bureau of Reclamation's reservoir operations fall under essential services and will continue to work, but there may be some less obvious ramifications that could slow down processes and timelines for ongoing projects.

Mr. Renstrom announced the wells in Apple Valley just went dry this morning (September 21, 2023) despite the Washington County region having had one of the wettest years in history. Mr. Renstrom emphasized it is imperative that we ensure safe drinking water for all of Utah and that we continuously monitor water supply and use to ensure farmers are protected and always have water.

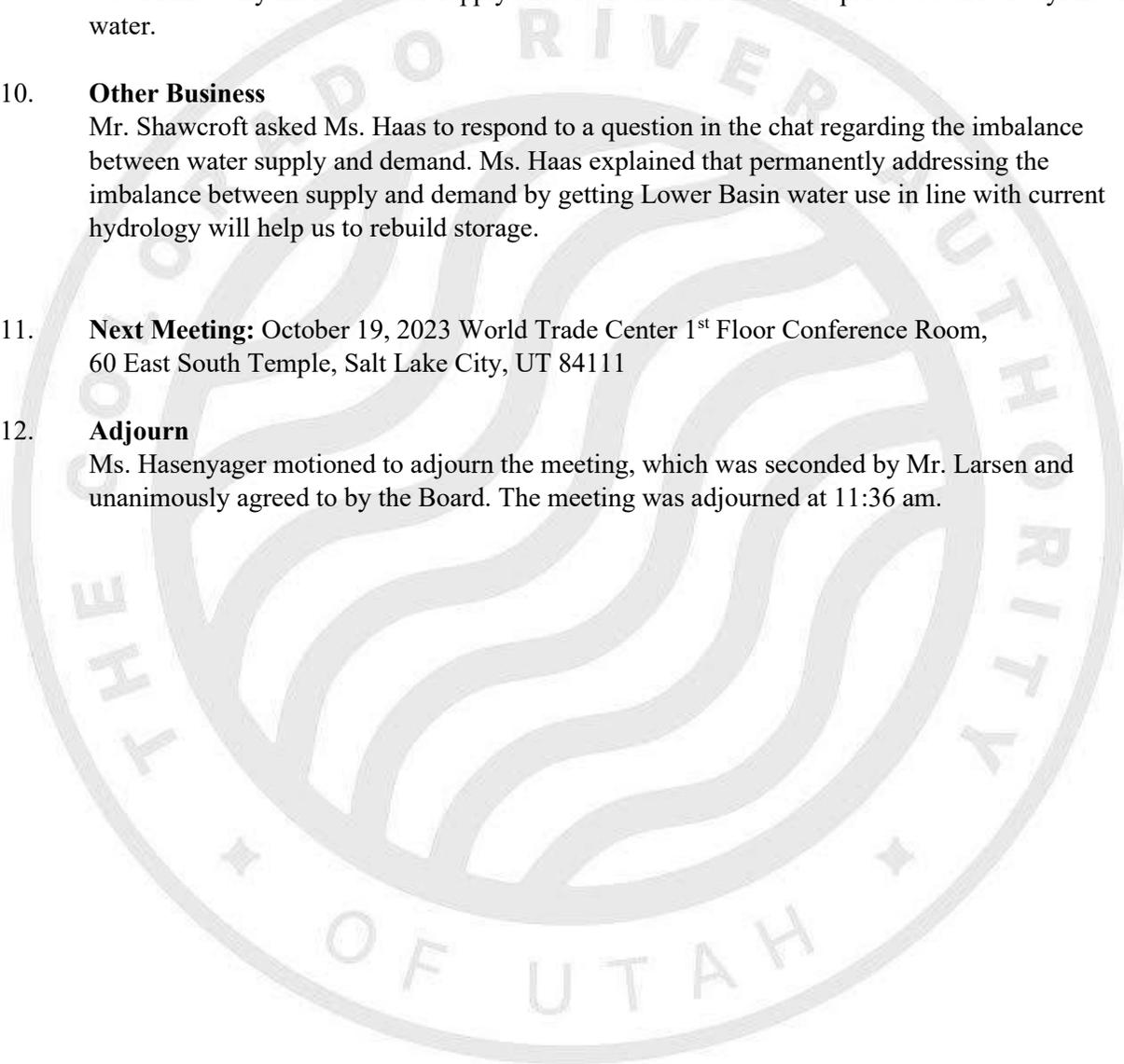
10. **Other Business**

Mr. Shawcroft asked Ms. Haas to respond to a question in the chat regarding the imbalance between water supply and demand. Ms. Haas explained that permanently addressing the imbalance between supply and demand by getting Lower Basin water use in line with current hydrology will help us to rebuild storage.

11. **Next Meeting:** October 19, 2023 World Trade Center 1st Floor Conference Room, 60 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84111

12. **Adjourn**

Ms. Hasenyager motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Larsen and unanimously agreed to by the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 11:36 am.



Attachment #1 – September 21, 2023 Attendee List

**September 21, 2023
Colorado River Authority of Utah Board Meeting
Attendee List – All Virtual**

Board Member Virtual Attendees:

Gene Shawcroft, Chair
Joel Ferry, Vice Chair
Dan Larsen
Jay Mark Humphrey
Candice Hasenyager
Zach Renstrom

Virtual Attendees:

Betsy Coleman, CRAU
Cody Stewart, CRAU
Lily Bosworth, CRAU
Betsy Morgan, CRAU
Holly McCall, CRAU
Cadi Sande, CRAU
Bart Leeftang, Central Utah Water Conservancy District
Teresa Wilhelmsen, Utah Division of Water Rights
Wendy Crowther, Utah Assistant Attorney General
Jordan Nielson, Northern Advisory Council
Adam Snow, Southern Advisory Council
William Merkley, Central Advisory Council
Michael Eytel
Cody Allred
Ted Sonnenburg, Division of Water Rights
Chandler Rosenberg
William Butcher, Price River Water Users Association

